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Rep. Waxman Renews Call for Congressional Action on Katrina Contracting

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today Rep. Henry A. Waxman called for congressional action to rein in wasteful Katrina spending, as new reports confirm the Administration's incompetence and mismanagement of Gulf Coast reconstruction contracts.

Exactly six months ago, Rep. Waxman, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and other members introduced the Hurricane Katrina Accountability and Contracting Reform Act (H.R. 3838). The bill would have created an anti-fraud commission to prevent wasteful spending, banned abusive contracting practices, and increased contracting transparency.

At the time, Democrats expressed concern that the Administration would repeat the same blunders that led to widespread waste, fraud, and abuse in contracting for Iraq reconstruction. As Rep. Waxman said last year, "We cannot allow greed, mismanagement, and cronyism to squander billions of taxpayer dollars as has happened too often over the last five years."

Despite Democratic calls for action, however, the Republican leadership has taken no action on this bill. In the past six months, they have allowed H.R. 3838 to languish, failing to call hearings or hold legislative markups.

"The rebuilding of the Gulf Coast has been plagued by gross incompetence, just like the reconstruction of Iraq," said Rep. Waxman. "And once again, Congress has failed to act as an effective check to contract abuses, and it has abdicated its constitutional obligation to conduct oversight."

"Every dollar squandered due to waste, fraud, and abuse is a dollar that is unavailable for the critical rebuilding needs of Gulf Coast residents," Rep. Waxman added. "The Administration is not meeting the needs of Gulf Coast residents."

To address these deficiencies, Rep. Waxman sent a letter today to Rep. Tom Davis, Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, renewing calls for legislative action. He also asked for oversight hearings to investigate the Administration's failure to manage and oversee the Katrina reconstruction contracts.

The legislative text of H.R. 3838, as well as a bill summary and a fact sheet on contracting abuses during the Bush Administration, are available online at www.democrats.reform.house.gov.